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DTR-6170

7 April 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Deputy Director for Support

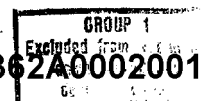
SUBJECT : Comments and Observations on the
Proposal of the Management Advisory
Group to Lengthen the Employee Probationary Period

REFERENCE : Note to DTR from A/DDS dtd 29 Mar '71,
same subject

1. Lengthening the probationary period for new employees to five years and subjecting them to a "rigorous, competitive weeding-out. . . at the end of the third and fifth years" would not be of any significant value to the Office of Training in pruning its rolls of unsuitable or unsatisfactory personnel. Except for Career Trainees, most professional requirements are filled through conversion of officers from other career services and through the rotational tours of experienced personnel. During the last five years approximately 15 professional people were obtained through external recruitment. Accordingly, the majority of OTR staff officers have been with the Agency well beyond five years. The present one-year probationary period is entirely adequate for evaluating the suitability of new clerical employees who are assigned to OTR from the Office of Personnel at an average rate of seven per year.

2. The MAG proposal would probably have a depressing effect on recruiting people into the Agency, especially if they are told (and they should be) that an offer of permanent employment is subject to the satisfactory completion of a five-year probationary period. As it applies to the Career Trainee, I think it is too long. The average age

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of the CT at present is 27. The prospect of being automatically eliminated at age 32 on the basis of competitive rankings and fixed percentages would not likely be considered an attractive proposition. I believe that selection procedures currently in force sufficiently guarantee that our CTs have all the necessary qualities and background for success in the Agency. Where failure occurs, it is often explained in terms of the individual not having received the right amount of direction, guidance, supervision, and training during his developmental years. Occasionally, outside factors, such as family problems, show up early or late in his career and affect his performance and flexibility in regard to assignments.

3. Speaking of Career Trainees, I want to correct and comment on a statement made in paragraph 6 which says that CTs often receive "protective performance evaluations" and "extra help" from their counselors. There is no policy or other directive existing in OTR which advocates the assignment of "protective" ratings (false, padded, inaccurate?) on CTs. To my knowledge, there never has been a practice of this kind. Further, Program Officers of the Career Training Staff encourage the utmost candor in reports prepared on the CT by component supervisors during interim assignments of the young officer. Whether or not this is done conscientiously, of course, lies beyond the control of OTR. I am not certain what is precisely meant by the term "extra help" except to note that Program Officers, or counselors, are obligated to help the new CT with his problems, official and personal, whenever they are asked to do so, and if appropriate. This function is quite identical to that of the duty of the supervisor during the early stages of any other employee's career. There is simply no one else to do the job, and, in a real sense, the Program Officer is the CT's supervisor. It would be unthinkable not to offer this basic service to a new employee.

4. Perhaps a fuller explanation would clarify the implications of the last sentence in paragraph 11 which reads: "The CS Evaluation Boards are having little difficulty identifying a marginal 5% at each grade among more senior officers and we think the rationale of a probationary period argues for more rigorous pruning then, than at mid-career." From the statement, I do not quite see how it can be concluded that a "rigorous pruning" during the five-year probational phase will substantially reduce (?) or eliminate (?) the need for such action in the middle time of an officer's career. This conclusion

-2-
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presumes that nearly everything detrimental to success will manifest itself during the early years. This would be an ideal situation, but I am not sure we can rely on it totally even though the limited experience of the CS Evaluation Panels seems to have produced some justification for this method (pp. 2-3). In any event, why leave the job to a panel when supervisors and career service heads should be examining the records of all newcomers on a continuing basis? Though such a review would uncover some potential misfits, it still does not come to grips with the problem mentioned in paragraph 4 of the MAG memo -- that of the officer who has "peaked-out" at his mid-career point.

5. I am disturbed by the line of reasoning set forth in paragraph 12 as justification for establishing a separation program founded on intensive competitive rankings and fixed-percentage cuts at the end of three and five-year periods. Granting that this approach might be the one to use, it should be applied for the right reasons -- that it is the fairest, most efficient, and most accurate, not that it relieves the supervisor of the distasteful chores of "documenting the record, writing the fateful recommendation, facing-down an irate employee," or "palming him off on another office." It is conceivable that a system such as the one advocated in paragraph 12 would not promote good management practices. Primarily, it is oriented toward helping the supervisor to avoid his on-going responsibility to evaluate the employee candidly and take whatever action is necessary at the time, including the preparation of unfavorable Fitness Reports and the accompanying warning letter. The tendency could well foster an attitude of "let the panel do it." I also think that deferral of action to three and five-year periods would have the unpleasant effect of focusing attention, internal and possibly public, on the release of relatively large numbers of employees at the same time.

6. I doubt if a five-year period of probation is needed to evaluate every professional employee. Something like that amount of time might be necessary in the Clandestine Service, considering the time required for training, Headquarters exposure, and an overseas tour. It certainly should be less for some research and analytical jobs in the Intelligence and in the Science and Technology Directorates. I wouldn't need five years to assess the abilities of an instructor in OTR. Accordingly, the adoption of a five-year trial period throughout the Agency would not be realistic. The Organization would probably end up with more than one set of probational standards.

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7. The solution to many of the problems outlined in the MAG paper are already available. In two words it adds up to "vigilant management." The following points are relevant:

25X9 a. Retain the one-year probationary period. It is entirely adequate for evaluating clerical employees and possibly other special categories of personnel. As stated in paragraph 3 of the MAG paper it succeeded in eliminating 40 [REDACTED] of the professionals. Possibly, Management should encourage that even greater emphasis should be placed on evaluating employees during this period. OTR training programs could be of further help in achieving this objective.

b. Continue to stress the fact that Fitness Reports must record absolutely accurate evaluations of employee performance and that this is a supervisory obligation, not an option. The uniform application of this elementary principle of good management would eliminate the need for procedures like the ones outlined in the MAG paper: it deals with the problem as it arises and on its own merits. OTR can help here also.

c. Employ more diligently and extensively the review procedures prescribed by [REDACTED]. As you know, these regulations require that at the end of the three-year provisional period the Head of the Career Service must ". . . carefully evaluate the individual's suitability for selection as a Career Employee. . . ." The regulation also establishes procedures for handling a recommendation that the employee's Career-Provisional appointment be terminated. Obviously, the various career services have not used this means of separating employees unfit for, uninterested in, or unable to assume the responsibilities and obligations of Agency employment. Perhaps a directive or instruction from top management is necessary to activate this little used regulation.

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[REDACTED]
HUGH T. CUNNINGHAM /
Director of Training

Attachment

MAG Recommendation

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ACTION		DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY
APPROVAL		DISPATCH	RECOMMENDATION
COMMENT		FILE	RETURN
CONCURRENCE		INFORMATION	SIGNATURE
Remarks: Hugh - We would like any comments or observations you may have regarding the attached. Since we must respond to Colonel White by 8 April 1971, we would like to have your comments no later than COB on 6 April. <div style="text-align: right;">  25X1A Robert S. Wattles </div> Att Cy of DD/S 71-1086			



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FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.	DATE
Assistant Deputy Director for Support 7D18, Hqs	29 MAR 1971

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3	Director of Personnel		
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ACTION		DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY
APPROVAL		DISPATCH	RECOMMENDATION
COMMENT		FILE	RETURN
CONCURRENCE		INFORMATION	SIGNATURE
Remarks:			
<p>Please let me have your views on</p> <p>the attached MAG recommendation by</p> <p>8 April.</p> <p>25X1A</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>LKW</p>			
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Executive Director-Comptroller			26 MAR 1971
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Att: Memo dtd 25 Mar 71 for ExDir fr Management Advisory Group,
 subj: Recommendation on Lengthening the Employee Probationary
 Period